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J A P A N E S E

E V A C U A T I O N

*A message from the
American Friends Serv-
ice Committee to the So-
ciety of Friends and to
our fellow Christians.*

T h e Japanese Evacuation

The forced mass evacuation of more than 100,000 Japanese from the West Coast creates a special responsibility for us to help preserve the ideal of brotherhood, and of political and religious freedom in our country. These fellowmen, nearly all of whom have thought of themselves as members of our nation, and two-thirds of whom are American citizens, have been placed under a ban without accusation and without trial. Bewildered and grieving old women and men, the sick and feeble, babies and young children—all have been forced to leave their homes and most of their possessions. Nearly two thousand students in our universities and colleges have had to leave their studies.

The fault rests squarely upon us as a people who have permitted prejudice, fear and hatred to flower into intolerance and violence, and now in a war situation have allowed the government to arrange this evacuation in direct violation of our heritage of social and racial justice. The United States was founded upon the premise that individuals of many differing races, re-

ligious beliefs, and cultural patterns could live together harmoniously and could create a strong, just and tolerant nation.

As a people and as a government we must not blind ourselves to the implications of such action. If one minority of our citizens, without trial and without proven guilt, can be forcibly moved under pressure, any minority under different circumstances of inflamed public opinion runs the danger of losing its democratic rights. Naturally, we recognize the right and obligation of the government to protect itself against sabotage, and to detain individual aliens definitely proved to be engaged in such activities, but we cannot concede the right of a government to take such arbitrary mass action against a group as a whole, most of whom are loyal champions of democratic institutions, and grievously disturbed by the Japanese attack upon the United States.

This action toward Japanese as a group intensifies the racial tensions and unrest already present in this country, particularly among Negroes, who wonder now whether the few rights they have won may not be taken from them, and who ask how much longer they are to be denied their full share of opportunity in American life. This compulsory mass evacuation adds one more

tragic chapter to the sad history of racial discrimination and intolerance, of anti-alien land laws, of discriminatory exclusion acts, to the prejudices and misunderstandings and economic exploitation, all of which had some part to play in the desperate plunge of the Japanese military into war against the United States. We should not now by our deliberate action add fuel to the flames of Japanese propaganda within Japan and throughout Asia and Africa against us and the white man in general. We should not follow the evil Nazi policy of forcing people from their homes because of race or origin.

An unbelievably bitter world will confront us at the end of the war. If we are to attempt to weave a pattern of world fellowship in which the threads of different cultures add luster and beauty to the design, we must begin now in our own nation to share the rights and privileges we claim. Greed, selfishness, fear and injustice will never make a united nation nor a peaceful world.

During this movement of the Japanese people, the American Friends Service Committee, in cooperation with many other organizations and individuals, has sought to do what it could to minister to the emergency needs of individuals and especially

of old people and children. Many in the affected areas have already expressed in many concrete ways their fellowship with the misfortunes of their Japanese neighbors. And now the American Friends Service Committee in cooperation with churches and other interested agencies, has been officially requested by the War Relocation Authority to render special service in connection with the transfer of Japanese students from proscribed areas on the West Coast to inland institutions. After due deliberation, this responsibility has been accepted.

It seems appropriate, however, that in undertaking this service, a statement should be made to our constituency making it perfectly clear that we do not accept this evacuation as a matter of course, nor approve it in principle. The events of the past few months have caused us deep humiliation and profound concern.

While evacuation is largely centered on the West Coast and has been caused by pressure within those states, it behooves us all to examine our own spirits to see whether our own lives are free from the corrupting influences which are responsible for the oppression of fellow citizens.

As part of that penitence, we have felt that we should share in such ways as our

limited resources permit in breaking the force of this calamity which has come upon the Japanese population. One of the ways we can help is in the relocation of students so that they may continue their preparation for a useful life among us.

The opportunity to place Japanese students in educational institutions so that they can pursue their studies and be integrated in the life of communities throughout the land is the more important because it is based upon the recognition that it would be contrary to the American pattern of life to segregate them indefinitely in detention camps or ghettos. This principle must determine the eventual disposition not only of students but of all the evacuated Japanese, and we believe that the responsibility at the earliest possible moment to take steps looking toward a permanent solution in accordance with this principle rests upon the people of the entire nation as well as upon the government.

It may be that opportunities to help in such efforts will be open to us, and if so we hope we shall be wisely guided in meeting them. But most of all we wish to call for a reexamination of the spirit of our own lives and a dedication anew to a reverence for that of God which is in every man.

Copies may be obtained from

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